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## Letter dated 26 May 2006 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

The United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peacebuilding (UNTOP) was established in 2000 at the request of the Government to assist in the post-conflict stabilization of the country, following the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan. UNTOP provides the political framework and leadership for the peacebuilding activities of the United Nations system in Tajikistan. Jointly with the United Nations country team and in partnership with the Tajik authorities at all levels, political parties, civil society, and donor countries, the Office works to establish the necessary conditions for ensuring the irreversibility of the peace process. UNTOP fosters the continuation of national dialogue and reconciliation, assists in strengthening democratic institutions and conflict-prevention mechanisms, promotes the rule of law, and supports national capacity-building in the area of human rights.

Tajikistan has made considerable progress in strengthening stability and national reconciliation during the past six years of peacebuilding. However, much remains to be done in overcoming the consequences of the civil war. To this end, UNTOP carried out in 2005/06 a national dialogue project on political pluralism and peace consolidation, which brought together over 500 Government officials, political party activists, and representatives of civil society in meetings across the country. Undertaken in cooperation with national authorities, the project provided a unique forum for building mutual trust and consensus on issues critical to the sustainability of the peace process. In fostering social partnership between civil society and the Government, the project contributed to improving the latter's transparency at all levels. UNTOP continues to play a unique and indispensable role as a quiet facilitator of solutions for the most contentious and sensitive issues that may often emerge in the transition context.

The forthcoming presidential elections, the first to be held during peacetime, are an important benchmark in the post-conflict political environment. With guidance from a United Nations electoral needs assessment mission, and the request of the Government, UNTOP developed a technical assistance project for the presidential elections to be held in November 2006. The project is to be executed in close cooperation with the national electoral authorities. The Office also facilitated the adoption by national authorities of steps to improve government and media relations and public access to information, such as the institution of a process of regular press briefings by State ministries.

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With a view to building national capacities for conflict prevention, UNTOP initiated a series of training seminars on human rights and conflict management for more than 900 community leaders, educators, lawyers, and local officials through its network of eight centres around the country.

With a view to strengthening the rule of law, the Office continued its activities in building professionalism and accountability in the law enforcement sector and promoting its transition and reform. The UNTOP civilian police adviser enacted the process of training for Ministry of the Interior personnel on international legal standards in police operations, with one project encompassing 40 instructors and over 1,000 Ministry of the Interior staff. The Office facilitated the publication of the Ministry of the Interior bulletin, thus improving the transparency of the Ministry and its outreach to society. UNTOP also arranged for the training abroad of 30 Ministry of the Interior personnel in civilian policing and peacekeeping, in preparation for the establishment of a national unit for possible participation in United Nations operations.

In the transition environment, violations of human rights may become a source of fault lines in society. To address these issues, UNTOP contributed to building national capacities in the legal protection of citizens, human rights education, and reporting and implementation under treaty obligations. For example, the Office promoted the establishment of the institution of a National Human Rights Ombudsman through a conference with 80 participants and international experts, in close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; assisted national authorities in implementation of recommendations of United Nations treaty bodies concerning the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, with one project reaching over 115 parliamentarians, judges, and activists; built consensus on the need to carry out the recommendations of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers; supported the implementation of the State programme on human rights education by promoting adoption of the first comprehensive curriculum on human rights in the secondary school system; and closely monitored human rights developments in the country and advised the authorities on politically sensitive issues.

The role of UNTOP as a key facilitator of post-conflict peacebuilding efforts in Tajikistan is recognized by donor countries, which recently pledged over US$ 2 million for the Office's projects.

In view of the important and very positive role being played by UNTOP, as well as the country's continuing need for assistance in the area of peacebuilding, and in response to the request of the Government of Tajikistan, it is my intention to continue the activities of UNTOP for a further period of one year, until 1 June 2007.

I should be grateful if you would bring this letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**